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The Story Lizzie Told

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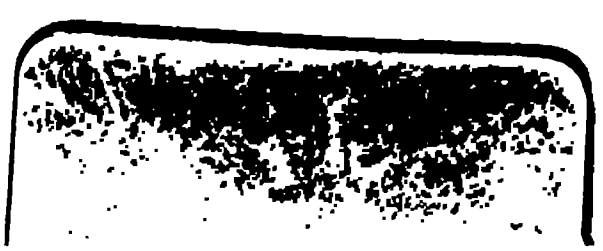

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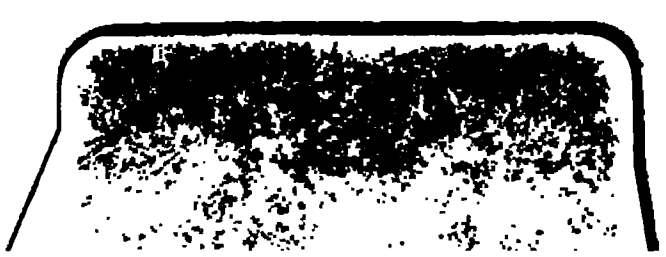

"Yes," says father; "and what's more, I've got a beautiful rare plant for Lizzie here."

See page 27.

THE

STORY LIZZIE TOLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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THE STORY LIZZIE TOLD.

"ISN'T it lonely lying here all day with nothing going on?"

"Oh, no, ma'am! So many things have happened to me, you can't think. If it isn't too bold for a poor girl like me to tell it over to a lady like you, I could begin to tell it now. You would like to hear all about it?

"Well, the first thing that happened to me was mother's giving me the baby to hold. I was just turned of four, and my sister Jenny was going on two, and the baby was just a baby, not any years old.

"'Lizzie,' says mother, 'you're a great girl now. You're four years old; and I'm going to trust the baby to you.'

"It was the first thing that happened to me. It made me feel grown up. I thought I was a woman, sure.

"After that I nursed the baby, and kept him from putting things into his mouth, and hushed him when he cried, and got him to sleep. He kept grow-

ing and growing; and when he was down on the floor, crawling into everything, another one came. And mother trusted me more than ever, and I washed and dressed both of them.

"Did I ever get time to play about?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. For as fast as one baby got to crawling around another kept coming; and mother said I was the oldest, and play was for little children and little dogs and cats, but not for big girls like me. When I was ten years old, we had six of them besides me."

"Six little dogs and cats?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; six little children that had been babies.

"And then the next thing happened. One day, when I was carrying Jim up stairs—he'd been crying to be took out-doors, and I'd been taking him out, and he'd seen a monkey with a little red cap on: well, my two legs just slipped out from under me, and I tumbled right into the room and bumped his forehead, dreadful.

"'You bad child,' says mother, and took him away, and put water on his forehead and kissed him.

"I lay there on the floor; if you would be pleased to look, ma'am, you'd see the very place.

"And says I, 'I couldn't help it, mother. It was my two legs as went right out, and I can't get up.'

"Mother she looked scared like, but one of the neighbours was there, and says she,—

"'Let her be; she's only shamming. I know these girls!'

"So mother let me be, and I lay flat on the floor, as still as a mouse, till father came home and nearly tumbled over me.

"'Hallo!' says he; 'whatever is the matter now?'

"'She's been a-laying there doing nothing these two hours,' says mother, 'and Mrs. Jones, she says she's making it.'

"'Mrs. Jones,' says father, 'there's the door; and I rather think it's wide enough for you to get out at; but the

next time you want to get in you'll find it's grown narrower.'

"So Mrs. Jones she went away very red in the face, and father he picked me up and set me up on end.

"'Now, little woman, whatever is it ails you?' says he.

"'I don't know, father. It's been coming on ever so long. My legs have got so shaky that it seemed as if there wasn't any bones in 'em. And the pains in my back have took me bad between times.'

"Father didn't say another word, and he didn't eat any supper, and after he'd lighted his pipe, he just sat thinking. Mother didn't say anything either. She undressed me and put me to bed;

and then such a thing happened! I don't want to talk much about it. It chokes me in the throat if I do. You wouldn't hardly believe it, ma'am, I'd been a big girl so long, but she reached over where I lay close to the wall to make room for the rest, and she kissed me! Oh, how I hoped my two legs would get well, so that she needn't have a sick child to take care of! But they didn't, and I got weaker every day, till I felt like a great long piece of thread dangling about. So father took me in his arms to the doctor's.

"I felt so ashamed when the neighbours all came out and looked at me, and saw Mrs. Jones a-laughing quite hard!

"But the doctor did not laugh at all when father carried me in and showed him my legs.

"'Yes, they're a couple of pipe-stems, and no more,' says he. And then he began to punch me all up and down the spine of my back, and in some places hurt me dreadful.

"'Well, my little woman,' says he, 'what have you been doing all your life now?'

"'Nursing the children, sir,' says I.

"'I thought so,' says he. 'Eating bad food, breathing bad air, and doing the work of a grown person. Have you any friends in the country you could send her to, my man?'

"'No sir,' says father, 'not one.'

"'There's little else to be done for her,' says the doctor. 'Plenty of good air, good food, and entire rest, might arrest the progress of disease.'

"'What kind of food, sir?' says father.

"'Beef and mutton, beef and mutton,' says the doctor.

"Father shut his teeth together hard.

"'I'll put you in the way of getting what the child needs in that line,' says the doctor, and he wrote something on a piece of paper.

"'There, take that to the street and number I have written here, show it to some of the people there, and you'll get beef-tea, and other things of the sort. Keep up her strength and spirits, and she may come round yet.'

"I believe it was a big kitchen father was to go to, where nice things are cooked for poor people when they're sick.

"But as we were coming away the doctor says, 'Mind, my man, green fields and fresh milk in the country are worth all the beef-teas in the world for a case like this.'

"When we got home and mother asked what the doctor said, father wouldn't answer at first. At last says he,—'He wants her to swallow down some fine lady's diamond necklace.'

"'Mercy on us!' says mother, and she dropped into a chair with the dish-cloth in her hand.

"Father went away to his work, and

mother kept groaning about the diamond necklace.

"'How's it to be got,' says she, 'and how could swallowing it down bring the bones into your legs, I should like to know?'

"'The doctor says it ain't my legs as ails me,' says I. 'It's the spine of my back.'

"'Them doctors, they thinks they know everything,' says mother. 'Didn't you say as it was your two legs as went out from under you? And them diamonds, they do worry me so!'

"I lay still, and thought, and thought. When the spine of your back aches the worst, you get so sharp!

"And says I at last,—'I know what

father meant. The doctor wanted me to be took off into the country, to drink milk and smell the green grass; and that would cost money, ever and ever so much money. For it's too far for father to carry me, and I should have to ride in something.'

"'But it's the diamonds as worries me,' says mother; and I couldn't get 'em out of her head, and the children they all plagued her, and I wasn't there to help, and she looked ready to drop. I got away down into the bed and cried to think how drove she was.

"And then I brightened up and called the children to me, and told them stories out of my head about things father had told me of. I put

in green meadows, and nice, quiet churchyards, where ivy grew all the year round, and there were pretty little graves for the good children to go to sleep in. And I says, 'Let's make believe that some day, a lady with a gold ring on her finger and a gold watch hanging round her neck, will come and take us all into the country and give us strawberries to eat.'

"'Mother, how does strawberries grow?' says I.

"'Why, on bushes, child!' says she. 'How else should they grow?'

"When father came home he laughed at that, and asked her if she supposed potatoes grew on trees?

"'Why shouldn't they?' says she.

'And, anyhow, how should I know? Was I ever out of London in my life?'

"It kept the children quiet to hear me talk, ma'am, only the little ones believed every word, and they're always looking for the lady to come and fetch them away.

"The next thing that happened was father's bringing home to me a picture of the country, all green and blue; splendid. You can see it nailed up there, opposite my bed.

"But you don't seem surprised, ma'am. Doesn't it look like the country? Did you say you wanted to take it down and put up a better one? Oh, please, ma'am, I love it so dearly!

"It took me a good while to get over having such a splendid present. I lay and looked at it all day, and when it was dark and I shut my eyes, I could see it just the same. And it made me tell the children more stories, and then they didn't hang on to mother so.

"I wondered what poor little children did who had something the matter with the spine of their backs, but never had anything happen to pass away the time. And I wished I could lend them my picture a week at a time, turn about and turn about.

"I hadn't got used to having it, and was lying so peaceful and happy thinking about it, when father came in one

night as mother was just a-going to undress me, and he got a sight of my back when she was rubbing it.

"He bursted right out crying, loud, and then mother bursted out, and all the children cried, and I bit my lips and held my hands together, and at last I bursted out, too. For I knew then that my father and mother had got a hunchback for their oldest child. At last father stopped short off. And then mother and the children stopped, and I hushed up pretty quick.

"'Peggy,' says father, 'go and tell that woman Jones to come here.'

"'I'm afraid to, father,' says Peggy. 'She says we set ourselves up above the common, and she laughs at us.'

"'Do as I bid you,' says father; and Peggy had to go.

"Mrs. Jones come quick.

"'Look here,' says father; 'look at this child's back, and put it alongside of the day you said she was making believe sick. Well, have you seen it? May be the day'll come when you'd like to eat them words of yours.'

"Mrs. Jones she felt bad, and I felt bad, and I called her to me, and says I,—'Don't lay it up against father, and I'll give you my beautiful new picture, full of green trees, and blue sky, and cows and sheep.'

"'What! that little flared-up thing on the wall?' says she; 'thank you, I

rather think you can keep it, and welcome, for all me.'

"You see there was always something going on that passed away the time.

"Father used to talk to us about his young sister Rose, who was at service in a gentleman's family, ten miles from London.

"She got an holiday soon after this, and came to see us. She told me more about what the country was like than ever father had, and all about the young ladies she took care of, and their toys and books.

"You couldn't believe ma'am, how it passed away the time to hear her talk.

"And then she asked me if I liked to read, and what books I had got.

"Then I had to tell her that I had never been to school, and didn't know how to read.

"'Poor little soul!' says she, and put on her bonnet and went and bought a book, out of her own savings, and wrote my name in it, and taught me a great A, and little a, that very day. And she took me in her arms and hugged me, and said,—'Oh that I could carry this poor lamb home with me, and give her what my young ladies waste every day of their lives!'

"Please, ma'am, did ever anybody hug you and say such nice things?

"After that, my father taught me all

my letters, and, all of a sudden, I could read!

"It was a big book that my aunt gave me. She said she got it because it would last me so long, and amuse me till I got another. It was called the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and was full of beautiful stories and pictures. I could tell it all to you if it wouldn't tire you, ma'am.

"Oh, you've got one, too? How nice. Have you got any other books? But mother looked in just now, and coughed twice. She thinks I am talking too much.

"You're not tired, ma'am?

"I read my book, and read it, and as soon as I got to the end I began

it again; and I showed the pictures to the children, and, Sundays, I read out of it to father and mother. Father is tender-like, and the tears would keep rolling down his cheeks when I read the prettiest parts, and one day he said, 'I'll tell you what it is, Lizzie; I've a good mind to go on a pilgrimage myself.'

"I felt awful bad when he said that, for I wanted to go, too; but how could I, with the bones gone out of my two legs?

"Father sat quiet, thinking and thinking. At last he got up all of a spring like, and put on his hat and went out.

"'Where's father gone to now?' says

mother. 'Not to any of them gin-shops, I hope.'

"'No!' says I, 'he's gone on a pilgrimage, I do expect.'

"Mother laughed, and said that wasn't so bad as them gin-shops, any way.

"But I felt bad and lonesome, and as if he'd gone and left me behind. And I couldn't get to sleep for thinking about it, till I heard his step on the stairs. He wouldn't tell where he'd been to, and we all went to sleep. But the next day he said he'd been to hear the preaching at a big church.

"'I was lifted away up to the third heaven,' says he, 'and I sang hymns, too.'

"'That's a lie, Joe,' says mother; 'for hymns you don't know how to sing. Better own it and done with it. You was a-singing songs at the gin-shops.'

"'That I wasn't, then,' says father; 'I was at Westminster Abbey, where they bury the grand folks, and the hymns hung all round the walls, printed in letters as big as the top of my thumb. Come, if you don't believe it, go with me next Sunday night and see for yourself.'

"'Indeed I won't then!' says mother. 'Westminster Abbey, indeed! with a bonnet and shawl like mine!'

"'The preaching's for poor folks, and poor folks goes to hear it,' says father.

"'And ain't you a-going on a pilgrimage, after all?' says I.

"'Yes, my lass, I am,' says he. 'I'll learn all about it at the preaching, you see.'

"After he'd gone off to his work, mother says, 'I'll go with him next time, you may depend. Something's come over him.'

"The day but one after that father come home all eager-like, and, says he, 'Lizzie, child, mightn't it amuse you if you had a flower a-growing in the window there? For the men talked at their work to-day about a 'Society for the promotion of Window Gardening among the Poor,' and they say there's just been a flower-show, and prizes

given to them as raised the handsomest ones. Wray's girl, Betsy, got a prize of six shillings for hers.'

"'You don't say so!' says mother.

"'Yes,' says father; 'and what's more, I've got a beautiful rare plant for Lizzie here: poor soul, it will be company for her these long days!'

"'What makes you say "poor soul," father?' says I, 'when I've got a picture, and a "Pilgrim's Progress," and a plant a-growing?'

"'Pshaw!' says father, 'whatever ails my eyes to water so easy? See, here's the little wee thing.'

"I almost screamed when I saw it, I was so glad. It was a-setting out in a little flower-pot, and its leaves was all green.

"'Which of you two is the biggest fool, I wonder?' says mother. 'There! now you've slopped water all over the bed-clothes and everything!'

"'I was only giving my plant a little drink,' says I.

"I called watering it giving it a drink, I was so silly.

"'Of course, I'm the biggest fool,' says father, and he laughed real pleased like.

"'Everything runs to societies now-a-days,' says mother. 'I wish they'd offer prizes to them as has the most children, and the handsomest ones. I'd go in for it, that I would! It ain't gentlemen's children as gets all the good looks.'

"'No, nor the sense, either,' says father.

"'There ain't many young ones as sets alone the day they're four months old,' says mother. 'See here! This one beats all our babies. And what did I pay for him at the shops? La, nothing at all, bless you; and so he ain't fit to fetch a prize.'

"'I didn't pay anything for Lizzie's plant, if that's what vexes you,' says father. 'Hicks gave it to me. He said he got it from his wife's second cousin, whose half-brother was nephew to one of the gardeners at Osborne, and that it's something costly and precious.'

"'Next news you'll say you dug it up in Paradise,' says mother.

"'May be,' says father. 'See, Lizzie, spell out the name that's wrote on this paper: or, no, you can't read writing. Perhaps I can.'

"So, after a deal of time, and spelling of it over, and scratching his head, he read it out, so:—

"'*Calendula officinalis.*'

"'That sounds splendid!' says I, and was sorry when it grew dark, because I could not watch it and see it grow. Father said the next exhibition would be on June the nineteenth, 1868, and he was sure it would be a big, strong plant by that time, thick with leaves and flowers.

"And if you'll believe it, ma'am, after a while it did have a little mite of a

leaf, and it grew up tall and leaned one side, and then grew some more and leaned the other side.

"Oh, it was such company for me, and I loved it so! Even mother, with all she had to do, got to watching it.

"So it went on all winter long, and in the spring a little bud came, and it took father and me a week to get over that. By-and-by, you could see little streaks of orange colour in the bud, and we talked about that, and were afraid the flower wouldn't bloom out for the right day, and then we were afraid it would bloom too soon. Somebody told father to cut a little ring out of stiff paper, and put it on to keep it back; he said they always did so with choice

flowers. Then I laughed and said I was a choice flower too, for something had kept me back from growing into a big girl.

"Then father said it was good to hear me laugh, and that I *was* a choice flower, ring or no ring. That's just father's way, please, ma'am.

"Oh how pretty my flower looked the day before the show! I was sure it would get the prize, for there couldn't possibly be a flower so beautiful as mine. Father carried it on his way to his work, and promised to bring it back, prize and all, at night.

"But I can't tell the rest now, ma'am. Something's a-squeezing and a-crowding at my heart, and I feel faint-like.

It's nothing to be scared about. I'm often took so.

"There! it's all gone now. But you say I mustn't talk any more? You say that you'll come again to hear the rest? Thank you, ma'am."

II.

"I'M sorry I frightened you so, ma'am. I wasn't scared myself. It was only one of my turns. Mother says she expects I'll go off in one of 'em sometime, but we don't tell father that. And I hope I shall live to go on a pilgrimage first.

"'Did my flower take the prize?'

"I'll tell you all about it, ma'am.

After father went with it in the morning, I thought what a long day it would be before he would bring it back at night. But I told stories to the children, and that kept them out from under mother's feet, and I read my 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and had a good time; but I was glad when I heard father's step on the stairs, and to see my dear, good little flower, safe and sound.

"'Don't take on, my lass,' says father, 'but the handsome flowers elbowed yours away off into a corner, and it's my belief that nobody so much as looked at it.'

"'That must be the reason it did not get the prize,' says I. 'I'm glad it *ought* to have got it, anyhow.'

"And then I said it was late, and time to go to sleep, and I lay down and cried under the quilt; but not loud; that would have plagued father. My poor little flower! Nobody had looked at it! Nobody had told it how pretty it was! And it was such a good little thing, to grow here in our crowded room, when other plants were having such a nice time out o' doors!

"But, after I had cried a pretty long time about it, I fell asleep, and dreamed a beautiful dream. I thought I was as well and strong as ever, and that I carried my flower to the Exhibition myself, and stood a little way back, to see what the people would say to it. There was a great crowd, and somebody said there

were lords and ladies mixed all up among us poor folks. But all I looked at was my flower. There it stood, up in a corner, all by itself; but nobody noticed it, nobody said a word about it, except Mrs. Jones; and I heard her laugh, and say, 'Do look at that mean, scraggling little atom of a marigold of Lizzie Gray's! The idea of bringing it here, among all these splendid flowers!'

"She passed on, and a gentleman and a lady stopped to look at it.

"'Oh! look at this poor, little, half-starved marigold,' said the lady. 'What a pathetic story of its own it tells. Fancy how the child's heart will ache when it goes home and tells her it has not won a prize, after all! Tuck

something down into the pot, dear, she will find it to-morrow; and what a surprise and what a joy that will be to her!'

"She was such a lovely lady to look at, with a face that went right down into your heart! And her husband said, 'Yes, darling, I have.'

"Then all the people who had brought plants, had tea and bread and butter in a tent, and there was a band that played sweet music; and the children tumbled about in the green grass. But I did not want any tea, or any bread and butter; and I had heard that sweet lady's voice, and it was music that nobody else heard. So I took my little flower-pot in my arms, and went

home with it; and it kept growing heavier and heavier, just as Jim used to the last days I nursed him, and I could hardly get up the stairs; and when I did, my two legs went from under me, and I fell right into the room.

"The fright woke me up, and then I knew it was all a dream; for it wasn't bedtime, and mother sat at work by the light of the candle, and father sat by her, cutting a bit of stick. So there wasn't any sweet lady, and there wasn't any kind gentleman, after all! The tears began to come again, and I could hardly help crying out loud. But I heard mother say,—

"'She didn't take it much to heart, after all, poor thing. She dropped off

to sleep like a lamb as soon as you got home.'

"'I hope she did,' says father. 'For I never had my heart so broke but once before.'

"'And when was that?' says mother.

"'It was the night I got a look at her poor back,' says father. 'You'd better let me know it when it was a-coming on, and not let me find it out all of a sudden. Why, when I went to my work next day, the streets and the houses and the people were there just the same, and the carriages rattling along just as usual; and yet they weren't the same streets, nor the same houses, nor the same people. Everything was altered to my eyes, and

altered to my ears. My trouble had struck in, and there wasn't no cure for it. Sometimes I think it's your fault with letting the poor thing carry the children about; and sometimes I think it's a judgment upon us for living like two heathen, as we always have.'

"'As to that,' says mother, 'I did the best I could by the child. Bringing up a family of young ones is a trade, and I never learnt it. I was a slip of a girl, and was set to the business with nobody to show me how to go to work, and without any tools. I wasn't brought up myself; I footed it up; and how should I know our Lizzie was getting beat out? She never said she was tired, and never said her back ached;

and I was so drove from morning till night, that I did not notice how pale she was getting, I tell you what it is, Joe. A man has his day's work, and there's the end of it. He can go to the beer-shops and gin-shops, and sit and warm the inside of him every evening, and then lie down to sleep all night, and wake up strong and hearty. But his woman's work goes on, and she's up and down of nights, and she lays and thinks what's to feed them all next day, and her head isn't empty enough to sleep on.'

"'Wife,' says father, 'don't mention beer-shops and gin-shops in the room where that angel of ours lays asleep.'

"You see, ma'am, he didn't mean anything by that. I hope you'll not take offence at father's calling a poor girl like me an angel.

"I thought, though, I ought not to let them believe that I was asleep; and I tried to speak, but I couldn't, for the tears. Did you ever have a lovely dream, ma'am, and wake up and find it was a dream?

"'I suppose I may mention the places where my husband goes and spends his time, and wastes his money,' says mother, a little short.

"'My trouble's struck in, I tell you,' says father. 'And it's got in so deep that even the drop of drink can't reach it. I've done drinking, wife.'

"'Then have you took the pledge?' says mother.

"'My pledge is laying there on that bed,' says father. 'I never drank to hurt me, nor to hurt you nor the young ones. I've always been a decent, sober, hard-working man.'

"'So you have,' says mother. 'And you're no heathen, either. You needn't call yourself names, Joe.'

"'May be you've forgot it,' says father, slowly; 'but I haven't, for I was brought up to know better; we pawned the Good Book out of our house, and that's why I said we were heathens.'

"I rose right up when I heard that. For I remembered what a big book it was, and how much reading it had in it.

"'Why, Lizzie, have you woke up?' says mother. 'There, lie down and go to sleep again. It's nigh upon ten o'clock.'

"'But you were talking about a book,' I said.

"'Yes, yes, we pawned it after father's hurt to his leg, when he couldn't go to his work; dear me, I'd forgot all about it. I've got the ticket now.'

"'Please God we'll have it back again,' says father, 'and Lizzie there shall read to us out of it every night.'

"Then they blew out the candle, and I lay and thought about my pretty lady in my dream, and the room seemed almost light. And the next thing I knew

it was morning, and everybody was getting up.

"That night when father came home, he brought the man with him that gave him my plant. The man kept his hat on, and when he looked at me, he said, 'Halloo!' and no more!

"Then father reached him the flower-pot, and when he saw that, he took it in one hand, and held it off as far as he could, and burst out a-laughing; and he laughed so hard that he fell back into a chair, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. He kept trying to say something, but every time he tried, he laughed harder than ever. Father looked bewildered at first, but then he began to laugh too, and then mother

and all the rest of us set in, till we made the room shake. Oh how tired I was; but I couldn't stop.

"At last he got out what he had to say, and it was just this, and no more,—

"'Why, it's nothing but a marigold,' and then he went off again.

"At last he sobered down, and says he, 'If I don't pitch into Bob Higgins, my name isn't Hicks. He told me it was such a rare and costly plant, with such a high and mighty name of it's own, that I thought your lass there was sure to win the prize. Never mind, my girl; we'll do better by you next year; and now let me tell you how to manage this plant. You've let it run up too tall, and it looks like a sickly girl that's got

no life in her. When this blossom falls off, pinch it here, so; and pinch it there, so, and it will throw out more leaves, and bear more flowers in the end; and if it don't get prizes, it will help pass away the time, won't it?'

"I said, 'Oh, yes,' and thanked him, and he went away; and I was holding the flower-pot while father showed him out, and one of the children brought me a little stick, and said I was to put it away down into the earth, and tie my plant to it, because it kept falling over, and looking as if it would faint away. It was the stick father had been working at the night before, and it wouldn't go down into the earth; but when I pushed it hard, it broke short off.

"There's a stone in the way,' says father, coming up to the bed, 'and you must dig it up.'

"And it's the truth I'm telling, and I wouldn't tell a lie for all the world; I dug up the stone, and it wasn't a stone; but it was something bright and shiny, and yellow.

"And says I, 'Oh, my pretty lady did it! My pretty lady!' and then I turned faint-like, and father threw water in my face, and mother fanned me with her apron; and when that didn't bring me to, they slapped my hands hard. The children thought they slapped me because I was naughty, and they came and stared at me; glad some, and sorry some.

"At last I got over it.

"So somebody had loved my poor little flower, and thought it was pretty, and told it so as well as she could. And my flower had come and told me, and I don't know which of us was the gladdest.

"And I told my dream to father and mother and the children; and father said I had seen a vision, and that it was no man or woman had sent It to me.

"After I had done telling them all about it, and every one had handled my yellow thing, and at last given It to me to hold, I felt as if there must be Somebody else to tell how happy I was, or I should burst. Did you ever feel so, ma'am?

"Whenever I woke up in the night I felt under the pillow to see if It was safe; and then I wanted to show It once more, but it was all dark and still, and I couldn't think who the Somebody was.

"The next day was Sunday, and father dressed himself in his clean clothes; and after dinner, made mother put on her's, and the children's, and says he,—'Now, Lizzie shall read to us all;' and he whipped out a book from under his coat, and it was the pawned book come home again. There was a mark in it, and he said,—'Read there, Lizzie. My old mother read there, every Sunday.'

"And I read the twenty-third

Psalm; father holding the book, it was so heavy.

"It sounded beautiful.

"'Father,' says I, 'who wrote the Bible?'

"'I don't know,' says he; 'I suppose God did.'

"'Mr. John Bunyan wrote my "Pilgrim's Progress,"' says I. 'It says so on the first page. Maybe he wrote the Bible, too. I don't much believe God did.'

"'Why not?' says father.

"'Why, God wouldn't say "The Lord is my Shepherd." I should think that it was a man said that. Or else some poor, sick girl.'

"I looked at the Psalm again, and

it said, over the top,—'A Psalm of David.'

"I read it out aloud.

"'Who was David, father?'

"'He was a—he was a—well, it's all mixed up in my head together; he was a man that got into a den of lions, or else he was a man that didn't, I don't quite remember,' says he.

"'Maybe it will tell, somewhere in the Bible,' says I. 'Do shepherds love their sheep, father?'

"'Of course they do. Folks always love the things they take care of.'

"'Does God?'

"'Well, now, the questions you put upon one, child! I oughter be a parson, to answer the half of 'em.'

"He was going to put the Bible away, but I had just caught sight of a verse, and read these words,—'God so loved the world, that He gave'—I hadn't time to see what He gave, but I knew it was something out of the common. 'O, father, just let me see what it was God gave because He loved us so.'

"'Loved the world, you mean.'

"'Isn't that us?'

"'How *should* He love us, I want to know?' says father, quite put out like. 'Though, to be sure, He may love you, poor child. I daresay He does.'

"'Then, would He like me to show It to Him?' says I.

"Father didn't hear me, I suppose, for he got up and went out.

"And I said to myself, 'I know now who the Somebody was that I wanted to show It to.'

"And I held It out on my hand, where He could see it plain; and I said, softly,—'Please! This is mine! Are you glad?'

"And I thought I heard Him say,—'Yes, I am.' But when I asked mother if she heard anything, she said she didn't.

"And then I thought it wasn't likely He'd say anything to a poor girl, like me.

"But the room seemed brimful of Him.

"O, I did wish the Bible wasn't so big and heavy, so that I could hold it myself, and read it all day long!

"Did you say, ma'am, that I should have a little Bible that wasn't big and heavy? Two Bibles in one house? That wouldn't be right. Perhaps father will give his to Mrs. Jones, and get good friends with her again.

"In the evening father said he was going to the preaching, and mother must put the children to bed, and go too. She never said a word about her old bonnet and shawl, but put them all to bed, except the baby, and took him with her.

"I was wide awake when they got home, and father told me a little about

the preaching. He said it was all about Jesus, who loved poor folks so, that He came down from heaven, and lived right in amongst 'em; and that they loved Him so that they would hardly give Him time to eat, but went everywhere He went; and He fed the hungry ones, and cured the sick ones, and was just like their Brother; and if they did bad things, He forgave them four hundred and ninety times!

"'Then, father, you'll forgive Mrs. Jones just one time, won't you?' says I.

"'I will, to please you,' says he.

"'Tell her about the hymns,' says mother.

"'I can't,' says father. 'Next Sun-

day night, as I'm a living man, I'll wrap her up in your shawl, and take her to hear for herself. It'll be next best to getting to heaven.'

"'Then *your* back'll be broke next,' says mother. 'Ain't it enough that you have to go two miles out of your way every time you go for her beef-tea and things? Must you go and kill yourself a Sundays?'

"I didn't say a word.

"I'd got so used to having things happen to me, that if two angels had come in and said,—'You can't go on a pilgrimage, and so we've come to carry you,' I shouldn't have been surprised. So I held It tight in my hand, and went fast asleep.

"When Sunday came round, father began again about the preaching. If I'd a-known how far off it was, I never would have let him carry me. It's a wonder it didn't kill him.

"How good the air felt, blowing in my face, when we got out into the street! And when I looked up into the dark night, all the stars looked down at me, and I thought they winked, and whispered to each other, and said,—

"'See that poor girl going to the preaching. When she was well, she hadn't time to go; but now she's nothing else to do. She couldn't go when the bones was in her legs; and now they're gone, she can. And she's got It in her hand!'

"When we first got into that grand place, I was scared, and thought they would drive us poor folks out. But when I looked round, most everybody was poor, too.

"At last I saw some of them get down on their knees, and some shut their eyes, and some took off their hats and held them over their faces. Father couldn't, because he had me in his arms; and so I took it off, and held it for him.

"'What's it for?' says I. 'Hush!' says father; 'the parson's praying.'

"When I showed It to God, the room seemed full of Him. But then it's a small room. The church is a million and a billion times as big, isn't

it, ma'am? But when the minister prayed, that big church seemed just as full as it could hold. Then, all of a sudden, they burst out a-singing. Father showed me the card, with the large letters on it, and says he,—'Sing, Lizzie, sing.'

"And so I did. It was the first time in my life. The hymn said,—

'Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,'

and I whispered to father,—'Is Jesus God?' 'Yes, yes,' says he. 'Sing, Lizzie, sing.'

"But I couldn't.

"The hymn made me forget all about my picture of the country, and my 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and It, and

set me upon thinking that my father and mother had got a hunchback for their oldest child, that had lost the bones out of her legs, and got 'em a-growing out in a lump between her shoulders; and how it broke father's heart, and how it made mother work so hard; and I pitied them so, and I pitied myself so, and the people sang out so strong and hearty,—

> 'Leave, O leave me not alone,
> Still support and comfort me!'

but I could only whisper it out, and maybe God didn't hear it, the rest sang so loud.

"You say you are sure He did? Then I am sure a lady like you ought to know, and so I'll think so too.

ing things to God. And I thought I would say something to Him; and I said,—'Please, did You see me sitting alongside of a real lady in a carriage with It in my hand? Did You hear her say she would often take me to hear the preaching? And, O, please, have You looked at my back, and felt sorry for father and mother, that they've got such a child?'

"My praying did not sound like the minister's praying; but then a poor girl ought not to set herself up to talk to God like a parson.

"And now you say, ma'am, that you had a little Lizzie once, that lives in heaven now, and that you love all sick Lizzies, for her sake? And that you

are going to give me some of her books, and all the nourishing food she would eat, if she lived down here? Then father won't have to go two miles for my beef-tea, and I shall grow stronger; and maybe the bones in my two legs will come back again (though the doctor does say it's not my legs), and I can get so as to help mother once more.

"But I hope there won't anything else happen to me, for my head is quite turned now, and I can't think what make me have such good times, when there are so many other people lying sick and sorrowful, and wishing the days and the nights wasn't so long. I'm sorry I've made you cry, ma'am,

off and on; and I suppose it's because my name it is Lizzie, and I'll be more careful next time; and, please, ma'am, don't give me all the things you said you would, but find some other poor girl, that hasn't got any 'Pilgrim's Progress,' nor any pictures, and that never saw two folks a-crying over her marigold, and giving It to her, and that never heard any singing, and praying, and preaching, and that nobody ever told she might dare to tell things to God. Father says there's plenty of them, up and down, lonesome, and tired, and hungry, and maybe it will keep you so busy looking after them, and speaking such sweet words as you've spoken to me, that the next

thing you'll know, the time will all be slipped away, and you'll see the shining ones coming to take you where your little Lizzie is.

"Being a poor girl, and ignorant, I can't quite make it out how some folks gets to heaven one way, and some another. The ways it tells, in my 'Pilgrim's Progress,' is to go on a great long journey, till you come to a river; and when you've got across that, you're right at the door of the city, and all your troubles is over. But cripples, like me, can't go on a pilgrimage, and I spoke to God about that; says I,—'Please, how is a girl like me to get there?' And it came into my mind,—'Why, Lizzie, little babies, as die when

they're babies, don't go on a pilgrimage, but they get to heaven all the same. Angels comes down and fetches them maybe.'

"And maybe they fetches up the lame girls, or helps them along. I should like to have one show me the way, if he didn't mind; and another go behind me, and cover my back with his wings; and I'd go in on tiptoe, and sit away up against the wall, where nobody could see me; and I'd sing softly, with the rest.

"You say you think they'll come for me, before long? Thank you, ma'am. But don't tell father. And if you ever come here and find I've gone, tell him, please, that I'll be sitting near the door,

watching for him; he'll know me from all the rest, because they'll be walking about.

"And now I humbly ask your pardon for talking so much, ma'am, and won't speak another word.

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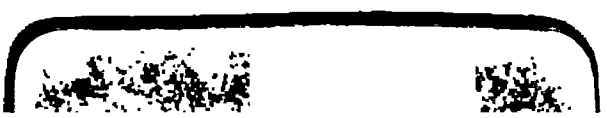
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